



Américas Award Books about Day of the Dead

The Américas Award, which began in 1993, was founded by the Consortium of Latin American Studies Programs (CLASP) to encourage and commend authors and illustrators who produce children's and young adult literature with themes concerning Latin America. More information can be found on the CLASP website (<http://claspprograms.org/pages/detail/37>). Each year the award names two winners, honorable mentions and commended titles. The books listed below are those books which address issues of relevance to teaching about Day of the Dead. Lists of other Américas Award winning books can be found on the CLASP website.



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A Gift for Abuelita: Celebrating the Day of the Dead/Un Regalo Para Abuelita: En Celebracion Del Dia Do Los Muertos, Nancy Luenn. Illustrated by Robert Chapman.

Rosita wishes that her grandmother, whom she adored, could be remembered in a very special way. She uses the occasion of el Día de los Muertos to make a gift that is just right to celebrate Abuelita. This is an exceptional book to use in a classroom to discuss the loss of loved ones. The Mexican culture provides many children and adults with a joyful, family festivity in which all remember those family members who have passed away. This bilingual version, culturally enriched illustrations, and poignant story will appeal to children in a personal way. (Grades 2-5). Rising Moon, 32 pages. **1998 Commended Title.**

Celebrate in Central America. Joe Viesti and Diane Hall. Photographs by Joe Viesti.

Throughout Central America, holiday festivities offer a rich blend of indigenous and European traditions. Stunning color photographs accompanied by a brief text provide details about the origins of eight holidays and how each one is celebrated in a specific Central American town. Includes Día de los Muertos (Sacatepéquez, Guatemala); Baile de la Conquista (Chichicastenango, Guatemala); Semana Santa (Sonsonate, El Salvador); San José Fair (Copán Ruinas, Honduras); Virgin of Masaya Celebration (Mesaya, Nicaragua); Columbus Day/Día de la Raza (Puerto Limón, Costa Rica) and two distinctive ways of celebrating Carnival (San Pedro, Belize, and Las Tablas, Panama). Lothrop, 32 pages. **1997 Commended Title.**

Day of the Dead, Tony Johnston and Jeanette Winter.

This delightfully intimate book about one of Mexico's most important holidays deserves to be added to any collection for young readers. Text and illustrations synergize to create a jewel-like account of a family making all the preparations to honor the spirits of their dead. Papá, mamá, las tías, and the children, all take part in baking bread, making tamales and empanadas, buying marigolds and finally going to the cemetery to welcome and celebrate with their dead. At the end of the night, "They gather their sleeping children. Upon the graves they leave the marigolds. Then they go walking, walking home, carrying candles like stars." Poetically written and colorfully illustrated this is a great book to share with young readers one-on-one. (Grades K-2). Harcourt Brace, 52 pages. **1997 Commended Title**

Fiesta Babies, Carmen Tafolla. Illustrated by Amy Córdova. Tricycle, 2010. 20 pgs.

Follow the fiesta babies through this bilingual book as they enjoy Mexican-American customs and culture. Perfect for very young readers, *Fiesta Babies* is light on text and heavy on vibrant illustrations. A glossary is provided at the end to explain the Spanish terms that are used in the mainly English text. (Grades K-2) Tricycle, 20 pages. **2011 Commended Title.**

Funny Bones: Posada and His Day of the Dead Calaveras, written and illustrated by Duncan Tonatiuh. Harry N. Abrams, 2015. Author and illustrator Duncan Tonatiuh's latest work presents an extraordinary blend of biography, art, and politics focusing on the life of José Guadalupe Posada (1852-1915), or Don Lupe, as he was known at the time. Posada is most famous for his socially-conscious depictions of calaveras, the often comic skeletons that are well-associated with Mexico's Day of the Dead holiday celebration. This non-fiction picture book will appeal to



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a wide range of readers, with its engaging hand-drawn, digitally collaged depictions of Don Lupe, first as a child with a natural talent in drawing, and then throughout his adult life as an artist mastering the craft of lithography. Throughout, we see as Don Lupe continuously pursues his artistic passion while offering social commentary about the world around him. The full-page spreads inspired by Don Lupe's work actively probe the reader to consider deeper meaning behind his artwork, such as critiques about social class, quickly changing technology, and violence during the Mexican Revolution. This superb work is easily adapted to a variety of classroom settings spanning subject areas such as history, art, and cultural studies. Additionally, *Tonatiuh* includes a detailed author's note, glossary of terms, and bibliography for readers interested in diving further into Posada's work. (Grades 3-6). **2016 Honorable Mention.**